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RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 1890  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1868  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1807  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1916  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 1880  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1907  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1562  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1578  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1766  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 1849  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1381  
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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT RAHMONOV CELEBRATES THIRD TERM WITH PRECIOUS  
JEWELS AND A NEW BENTLEY

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11. SUMMARY: President Rahmonov was sworn in to his third term on November 18, a warm sun-filled day. The festivities were low key, but expensive, filled with precious jewels, flag waving patriots, a military parade, and one shiny new car. Embassy sources estimate inauguration costs amount from \$500,000 to \$1 million, not including the (re)construction of two new grand halls where the swearing in ceremony and celebratory feast took place. Security leading up to the day was tight and Rahmonov encouraged Tajiks to celebrate it as a holiday. END SUMMARY.

12. The official swearing in ceremony, conducted at a newly constructed "Somon Hall" at the State Dacha lasted approximately one hour on November 18. More than 1500 officials including parliamentarians, region and district chairmen, and prominent public figures packed into the hall to watch Chairman of the Central Commission on Elections and Referenda hand President Rahmonov his official certificate and watch him take the oath of office.

13. Prior to the swearing in, the Chief of the Constitutional Court hung the new presidential star fashioned into a necklace of Tajik precious stones around Rahmonov's neck. Three soldiers placed the Tajik Constitution under Rahmonov's right hand. No Koran was visible. Prior to the ceremony the state television aired a recording of a poem by famous Tajik poet Mr. Bozor Sobir, who is presently residing in the United States. The poem stresses that Tajiks have roots to Zoroastrians and more ancient times pre-dating Islam. The poem's imagery described Tajiks as "people who wear white coats and will never change their white coats to another color," inferring that Tajik heritage and history were not fundamentally altered by the adoption of Islam. Following the oath, the president knelt to kiss the hem of the Tajik flag. His speech singled out three countries - Russia, China, and the United States - as special friends of

Tajikistan.

¶4. The president departed the Dacha and slowly cruised down Rudaki Avenue, Dushanbe's main thoroughfare, in his new, pristine black Bentley convertible. A cavalcade of new black Mercedes escorted the president down the street for half an hour as television cameras filmed the procession with Rahmonov waving, Miss America-style, to the thousands of university students gathered along the street to greet him. Students and residents lined the streets waving flags and congratulatory banners. As soon as Rahmonov passed the students, they were dismissed and permitted to go home.

¶5. Crowds also gathered around Somoni Square in the center of the city, where Rahmonov gave another speech. Approximately 5,000 military officers marched in formation in front of the president after swearing an oath of allegiance to him. This is the first time military personnel were requested to take an oath of allegiance to the president.

¶6. Following the ceremonies, Rahmonov hosted a reception at the renovated Exhibition Hall, where he was clearly in a festive mood. The Ambassadors of Tajikistan's three "partners" -- Russia, China and the United States -- were prominently seated in a gesture of solidarity, and throughout the reception the president frequently raised his glass to the three. Rahmonov gave several impromptu speeches declaring that Tajikistan had survived the bad times and is moving forward. He emphasized that inauguration day is a holiday for the people of Tajikistan and invited his guests to "celebrate like civilized white people." (Comment: No comment.) As the party went on, and on, the president took to the stage and began to sing. At this point, the television cameras stopped filming.

¶7. Security was tight during the parade, due to the fact that the country's president was riding down a main street standing in an open car. Hundreds of police were stationed along the

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route to deter possible trouble-makers. Secret service police tried to confiscate the iPod of a PolOff observing the parade along Rudaki. In addition, a local Embassy employee's relative who was wearing traditional Tajik clothing was singled out and frisked by police, even though he did not exhibit any extraordinary behavior. Residents along Rudaki were forbidden from observing the parade on their balconies. Two weeks prior to the inauguration, Tajik special forces began checking passports of all residents along Rudaki. Authorities tried to close all shops, particularly those that sell cellular phones along the main street. Despite the order, some shops were still open for business.

¶8. COMMENT: Unlike typical presidential inaugurations in Central Asia, Rahmonov did not invite foreign dignitaries to his party. Because of the controversy surrounding the election -- this being Rahmonov's third term which some deem unconstitutional and the OSCE's initial report saying that the uncompetitive election was not a true test of democratic process -- it is not surprising that the government would choose to keep events low-key - or at least as low key as a new Bentley and bejeweled necklace would allow. Rahmonov, ever the populist politician, emphasized that the inauguration is also an important part of Tajikistan's living history and that the celebration was as much for the Tajik people as it was for him.  
END COMMENT.

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